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MODERN INFIDELITY

AND THE

BEST METHODS OF COUNTERACTING IT.

A PAPER READ AT THE

New York Conference of the Evangelical Alliance,

BY

THEODORE CHRISTLIEB, D.D., PH.D.,

Professor of Theology, and Chaplain to the University of Bonn, Prussia.

TRANSLATED BY

HERBERT U. WEITBRECHT, PH.D.

REVISED EDITION, WITH A PREFACE

BY THE

VERY REV. R. PAYNE SMITH, D.D.,

Dean of Canterbury.

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PREFACE.

THE following essay on Modern Infidelity, by Professor Theodore Christlieb, of the University of Bonn, when read at one of the meetings of the Evangelical Alliance at New York, in the autumn of 1873, made so profound an impression upon the audience, that he was requested to read it again, inserting those passages which, on the first occasion, he had omitted on account of the essay exceeding the usual time allotted for delivery. Upon this second occasion, the large church offered to Dr. Christlieb for the evening, was crowded in every part by a highly intelligent mass of people, who, for two hours and a half, listened with the most intense interest, elicited not by any rhetorical display on the part of the speaker—for nothing could be more quiet and simple than Dr. Christlieb's manner—but by the ability displayed throughout the paper. The writer of this short notice was himself present, and was much impressed by what he heard, and he now ventures to call the attention of the Christian public of England to Dr. Christlieb's work. It has already commanded a large sale in America, where it has been published in a separate form, distinct from the collection of papers read at the meetings of the Alliance, and which, when collected

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together, will fill one or two large volumes; and its author has now been prevailed upon to publish it in a similar manner in England, in the hope that it may help to confirm many here in the faith. The reader will find the argument calm, clear, and convincing, moderate in manner, but strong in thought; and if it gives as much pleasure in the perusal as it did in the delivery, and carries to the mind the same entire conviction of the firm basis upon which our Christianity stands, as was the general feeling impressed upon those who had the happiness to be present in person when Dr. Christlieb read this essay, the Church will have reason to congratulate herself upon so able a reasoner taking up the argument in her defence. It is a work well worthy the attentive study of all who are anxious to attain unto the truth.

R. PAYNE SMITH.

Deanery, Canterbury,
Feb. 2, 1874.

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THESES.

I. To be true to her essential spirit and character, the Evangelical Church must eschew all methods of defending her faith which do not rest upon a spiritual and moral basis, and do not aim at bringing opponents to accept the truth as it is in Christ by means of free personal persuasion and conviction.

II. The most effectual method of combating *unbelief in individuals* is the *moral isagogic, i.e.*, that by which the conscience is touched, the religious need awakened, and salvation in Christ heartily and lovingly testified, from personal experience, to be the truth, which alone can satisfy the inward cravings of the soul.

III. In combating the *systems of unbelief*, success is only to be hoped for from a really *scientific* method of defence. This consists, on the one hand, in a constant employment of the ever-improving apparatus of modern investigation; on the other hand, in that quiet objective spirit, the only aim of which is to attain to the truth; both these being combined with the joyous certainty that the scientific struggle has, in all ages, contributed not a little toward grounding the Church in her holy faith, and showing how firm are its foundations.

IV. The chief systematic tendencies of modern infidelity may be comprised under these three heads :—unchristian philosophy, destructive historical criticism, and anti-miraculous natural science. The first step in an effectual scientific defence against these must be to *define clearly the extent of those doctrines which constitute the specific, and therefore inalienable nucleus of the Christian faith*, and thus to distinguish plainly between the fundamental and central truths necessary to

salvation, and those less central ones, which allow of various shades of subjective opinion; in a word, to recognise the difference between the *Biblical substance* of our religious belief and its *dogmatic formulation*.

V. Against *Antichristian speculative philosophy*, our scientific apology should especially defend the Christian idea of God, as that which alone corresponds to the conception of the Absolute, and the Christian view of the world in general, as a compact and organic unity, in all its beauty and grandeur. The central truth of this system we take to be the help vouchsafed by God in Christ to a sinful world, which approves itself to our conscience as an inward necessity for the true satisfaction of our religious and moral needs, in view of the impotence of all human self-help in overcoming evil. The uncertainty and untenableness of all, even modern philosophy, should be proved from the constant fluctuation and change of its principles, the undemonstrated character of its assumptions, the inner contradictions in its construction of the relations between God and the world, and its failure to yield any positive and lasting results.

VI. The duty of our scientific apology, as against *destructive historical criticism*, is to show that the Scriptures become unintelligible if their inspiration be denied, while at the same time we should uphold their human and Divine (not solely Divine) character, and distinguish between a justifiable and reverent criticism, and one which shows a false aversion to the miraculous. The latter must be combated by exposing its false philosophical principles, which apply merely human standards to incommensurable Divine magnitudes, its subjective caprice and *coups de force* in the treatment of details; by pointing to the growing testimony of modern archæological research in favour of Scripture; but especially by demonstrating the impossibility of inventing the picture which the Gospels give of Christ, or of any sufficient explanation of the original Christian

belief, or the existence of the Christian Church, without accepting the Gospel narrative as historical fact.

VII. Against the attacks of *anti-miraculous natural science*, we must first of all draw a sharp line between the aim and object of the Scriptures and that of natural science; showing that the former, as a record of Divine Revelation, only touches upon the region of physics in a fragmentary manner, and with a few general outlines, for the purpose of laying a foundation for its moral and spiritual teachings; while the latter is confined to an empirical observation of things as they are, and can therefore only make conjectures as to the processes by which the world originated, but cannot possibly render the existence of a spiritual and invisible world a doubtful matter by any results of microscopic or telescopic investigations. After having rejected the anti-miraculous axioms of modern science by resting on the Christian, as the only reasonable idea of God and his relation to the world, we should proceed to take our stand upon the harmony which has already been established in general outlines between the Biblical cosmogony and the results of natural science, as a fact which justifies the hope of a future solution of all differences which yet remain. Further, we have to expose the uncertainty and rashness of many conclusions, which, though supposed to be strictly scientific, yet rest upon mere hypotheses, and are constantly being modified by stricter investigations. Finally, we must repulse the hypothesis as to the generation of man from mere natural forces, as being an attack on his true dignity, by arguments drawn from our moral and spiritual self-consciousness, confirming the Scriptural doctrine of the divinity of human nature, and by pointing to the physiological, but still more to the historical, arguments for the unity of our race.

VIII. Our defence against the inroads of *infidelity as a social power* must, in order to be effectual, be conducted according to the rule, "By their fruits ye shall

know them." To this end we must furnish *practical historical proofs of the destructiveness of infidelity* far more extensively than has hitherto been done, by a fearless exposure of its evil fruits in spreading an unlimited pride, confusing all moral and religious ideas, and founding a despotism of hollow phrases: in exhausting all vigorous and independent congregational life, as regards both worship, discipline, and Church government; and in paralysing all energetic and self-sacrificing work for the extension of God's kingdom. Especially we should point out the utter inability of unbelief to minister to the wants of souls, or to supply any practical religious need, particularly in times of trouble, and its destructive effects in undermining and ruining education and family, civil and political society, and all national or social prosperity.

IX.—The *most irresistible method* of defence against the last-named, and all other forms of infidelity, is the *actual proof of a Christian life*. The duty of furnishing this proof falls partly to the lot of the *Church*, by the removal of all unnecessary quarrels and jealousies at home and abroad, and by cherishing a wide-hearted brotherly love and union among all evangelical denominations: partly it falls to the lot of the *congregation*, by openly and joyfully witnessing, in word and deed, for Christ before the world, by developing a vigorous Christian associational life, by exercising a Christian influence on the press and popular literature: partly, also, it falls to the lot of *individuals*, by arming themselves more fully with spiritual weapons through prayer, by moral and religious personal conduct which shall outshine that of the opponents; by faithfulness in work, patience in suffering, and peace in death.

MODERN INFIDELITY AND THE BEST METHODS OF COUNTERACTING IT.

The question as to the best methods of counteracting modern infidelity is so wide a one—whether we consider it in a scientific, a historical, or a practical and moral light—that it is imperatively necessary for us to confine ourselves in its treatment to two points of view. First, then, we would indicate the chief *scientific positions* in which attack and defence can be most successfully maintained—especially drawing attention to those points in the great struggle which have hitherto been overlooked; and second, we shall endeavour to sketch out the *practical tasks* imposed upon us as members or teachers of a Christian community, as well as on the Church of Christ at large, in the great battle against the unbelief of our day. All questions of detail we will leave to free discussion.

We Germans are notorious for making long introductions, but to-day—notwithstanding all that might with advantage be said—I prefer to omit preliminaries altogether. I will not, therefore, stop to give an exact limitation or definition of the term "modern infidelity," although this notion has not everywhere quite the same extent; as, *e.g.*, in England, some opinions are called rationalistic, which in Germany would hardly be so designated. I hope, however, to express the view common to us all, when I say that we comprise under the name of "infidel" all those tendencies and systems which militate against the Biblical and Christian view

of God and of the universe, which do not consider Holy Scripture as an authentic record of Divine Revelation, and which in theory or in practice refuse to acknowledge the central doctrine of our faith, viz., the salvation that has appeared in Christ. The term modern infidelity, then, would designate the same tendencies and schools of thought as they appear at the present day, *i.e.*, armed with weapons furnished them by the philosophy, the historical criticisms, and the natural science of our times.

Finally, we pass by the various schools of unbelief with their specific principles, such as Pantheism, Rationalism, &c., since the more important of them will be separately treated of to-day ; and we merely glance at the different forms practically assumed by modern unbelief. Among these forms we see every possible gradation of departure from Christian truth, ranging from the indifferentism which still admits of a nominal connection with the Church, to a fanatical and aggressive hatred to all that belongs to it ; from a Pilate's tone of haughty despite, to blasphemous mockery ; or from the learned investigator and critic, who with immense diligence and acuteness endeavours to reduce all the Divine elements in Scripture to mere natural phenomena produced by human historical agencies, down to the shallow journalist, who is fain to widen his circle of readers by piquant mockery of all "orthodoxy" and "methodism." Essentially the same tendency of thought is represented by that critic who, as the result of the long conflict, would have us substitute the "new faith" (by Messrs. Lessing and Darwin) for the "old faith," but who, forsooth, ardently desires to see the old order of society preserved at least until his eyes are closed, as by those fanatical enemies of the present social order, who already anticipate the logical results of the "new belief," *viz.*, a chaos formed by the destruction of society's present framework, of all the ideal elements of life, even of the

worship of art-heroes still left to us by Strauss, and the proclamation of a gospel of the flesh which shall teach man to cultivate naught but the palpable and sensuous.

If, in view of these increasingly radical and threatening attacks, we inquire after the *best* methods of repulse, we thereby indicate that there are various methods of differing value. The defence must, of course, vary in its method, on the one hand, according to the nature and extent of the unbelief, the causes of its origin, and in the manner in which it conducts its assaults against our faith ; on the other hand, according to the position which we desire to maintain. But we may safely say that there are, and always have been, certain recognised and well-defined lines and maxims of defence, though differing much from one another in value.

A thoroughly wrong method—one which is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, and has not, sad to say, always been used by the Roman Church only —is the suppression of opposition against certain dogmas by physical force, or by merely appealing to the outward authority of the Church. In the same way we reject—and I think you will agree with me in this—as unevangelical, unfruitful, and productive of confusion, the cognate tendency shown by the extreme ecclesiastical party in the Protestant Church, who would oppose the unbridled independence and subjective arbitrariness of the criticism of our day by an overstrained assertion of the rights of the priestly office, and would endeavour to raise a barrier against the prevalence of free investigation and spontaneous appropriation of truth by laying an exaggerated stress upon the sacramental actions of the Church, which the most advanced of them are already beginning to make into sacrificial rites. These theories and tendencies we reject ; for a knowledge or appropriation of saving grace communicated otherwise than by moral (not magical) means is opposed no less to Scripture than to the spirit of our age !

The trust that sustains us in this tremendous struggle, waged not with men alone, but with all the powers of darkness, must not be founded on ourselves, nor on other weak men; not on any outward assistance from the State, nor on forms and ceremonies, (for "cursed is the man that maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvii. 5); but on the Lord Himself who sits exalted at His Father's right hand, as Ruler over all, even the raging of His enemies. His presence is not bound to outward forms or traditions. He is the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 17), and from Him proceeds the Spirit of truth. To this His Spirit we must in the last resort leave the work of convincing men's hearts and minds of the truth of Christian Revelation, without sparing them the trouble of free investigation or of a conscientious decision and self-resolve. In accordance with these principles, our human task in the battle against unbelief can be no other than to overcome the opponent by moral and spiritual means. First of all, that is, by an earnest, spiritually vigorous testimony for Christ; next, by a truly scientific delineation of Christian belief, as a view of the world and of God, which is strictly coherent and corroborated by history and conscience, while at the same time openly acknowledging all its difficulties and obscurities; and last, by a practical demonstration of its truth in Christian living and suffering.

Keeping this fundamental rule in view, we observe that unbelief presents itself to us socially in different shapes, either isolated in individuals, or systematically formulated in scientific schools, or practically carried out by the press, clubs, unions, &c., and forming a threatening power in our social life. Thus our subject naturally divides into three heads: How may we best counteract Infidelity—I. In individuals? II. In scientific systems? III. As a social power, practically extending its influence throughout wide circles?

I. Infidelity in Isolated Individuals.

Under this head we will only give a few suggestions, in order to have more room for the other parts.

The following treatment seems to me the wisest: First, we must endeavour to obtain for ourselves (and mostly for the individuals in question, too) a clear idea of the special causes from which their unbelief has originated. These may be of very varied character. They may consist in received tradition, in discoveries of modern science, in political or social phenomena. Often unbelief results almost as a natural necessity from the whole spiritual and moral atmosphere of a man's surroundings. Let us put ourselves in the place of such individuals, and not forget (as is, alas ! too often done) the share of blame which frequently attaches to the Church herself, by reason of her neglect to care for souls, her inward nakedness, her fruitless bickerings about trifles, her narrow-minded party spirit, all of which constantly do an infinity of mischief by alienating from her the hearts of thousands. Such thoughts will produce in us true humility and hearty sympathy with the inward misery of those who are far from God—feelings without which we shall never be able to gain their confidence, nor lead them to see the innermost causes of their unbelief in certain moral failings.

It is not for nothing that our Lord classes unbelief with hardness of heart ("He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart," Mark xvi. 14; cf. Luke xxiv. 25). In the first and last resort, all unbelief springs, not from the hardness and incomprehensibility which the faith possesses for the understanding, but from hardness and perverseness of the natural heart of man, which will not bow to the mighty and solemn truth of Divine Revelation. This perverseness is a strange mixture—on the one hand, of cowardice, when a man

has not the courage to let his inward failings be uncovered in all their nakedness, nor dares to enlarge his own narrow views according to the great ways and deeds of God, but would fain make those fit to the measure of his own small ideas;* and thus, on the other hand, of overweening self-confidence, when the same man thinks far too highly of human knowledge and accomplishments, and far too little of God's mighty and holy government when he would attain to every thing by means of his own knowledge and power—in a word, when man would far rather help himself than let himself be helped by God, and thankfully accept the redemption brought by Jesus Christ. In truth, this is the material principle which divides all unbelief and false belief *toto cœlo* from true belief: on the one hand, there is self-help; on the other, God's help. The pride of the philosophical critic, just as much as that of the natural scientist, is always striving to substitute human activity and spontaneity for human receptiveness before God. Instead of *Soli Deo*, its motto is *Soli homini gloria!*

Last, but not least, among these general inward causes of unbelief come the positively earthy inclinations of the human heart, its proneness to satisfaction in this world, a tendency which is seductively encouraged by the present materialistic denial of another life; or, to put it plainly in a word, the power of the dollar. This is a far greater hindrance to true belief than all the writings of philosophers and critics put together: this worship of Mammon it is that causes a deep and wide-spread disaffection against all ethical and spiritual truth, and a perversion of the moral judgment, against which all mere logical reasoning is of no avail. The causes of unbelief really lie in the heart and will. However

* "Animus ad amplitudinem mysteriorum pro modulo suo dilatetur, non mysteria ad angustias animi constringantur."—Francis Bacon, *De Augment. Scient.*, x. 1.

strong outward influences may be, in divine things no one errs entirely without his own fault.

If such be the case, then the most effectual method of opposing unbelief in individuals is that which we may term the *ethico-psychological* or *isagogic* method; that is, the method which leads inward to the heart and conscience of those addressed. Let me explain myself.

First of all, we should endeavour to lead our brother to a clear and sober recognition of the inward causes and the effects of his unbelief on his own moral development; this, however, not as inquisitors, but with hearty and humble sympathy. "Reflect," let us say to him, "on the first beginning of your doubts. From what region did they come? Is not, perhaps, your present creed merely the theology of the natural heart? And can you say that this unbelief has been a real blessing for your inner life? Does its increase denote a true moral progress, moderation in happiness, comfort and support in misfortune? Oh, give a true and upright account of all this, not to me, but to yourself and God!"

Later on we should show in how false a manner the doubter usually examines the Divine origin and the truth of the Christian faith. As a rule, he makes the convenient demand first to be convinced by scientifically exact arguments of the truth of Christian revelation before he will accept it. He would first know, and then believe. But this way cannot bring him to his goal. We must show the fundamental error of this demand, which consists in a confusion between the region of morals and religion and that of mathematical science. Spiritual truths should not and cannot be mathematically demonstrated. First they must be apprehended by the heart and conscience, and they will then prove themselves to the understanding as divinely true and necessary. Were faith a mere matter of demonstration, it would cease to be faith, *i.e.*, a moral act consisting

in a trustful yielding up of self to that which as yet we see not (Heb. xi. 1).

Further, we should go on to show that faith and knowledge, far from being opposed, naturally supplement each other, and that true faith is the source of the deepest and highest knowledge. All learning is necessarily preceded by a submission to the authority of the teacher; and this preliminary submission of the intellectual and critical faculties to the truth of Revelation brings light into the soul, and lays the foundation for healthy, sober, and clear views as to God, our own being and condition, sin and its cure, and our final destiny. Thus faith, *i.e.*, the intrusting ourselves to the light of Divine Revelation, leads to the knowledge of the most exalted truth; indeed, it is the beginning of it.

If this way to knowledge seem hard to you, ask yourself whether the Christian faith does not correspond to and supply the deepest needs of the human heart. And this is another important point in the treatment of unbelievers. The question turns upon the recognition of evil in ourselves. For the whole struggle between belief and unbelief, as has truly been said,* is but the conflict between those who treat sin as a light matter and those who are heavily oppressed by it until they come to Him who takes their burden away and lays His light yoke upon them. Do you glory in your upright moral life? Have you, then, ever turned the whole energy of your moral consciousness inward in a strict self-examination? Even a great thinker like Kant once thoughtfully paused before the universal and unquestionable fact of a "radical evil" within us. And no upright man can help doing the same. But the depth of this conviction depends upon the standard which a man applies to himself, upon the idea which he has formed of his aim and

* Cf. A. Peip, *Das Credo der Kirche und die Intelligenz des Zeitgeistes*, 1872.

destiny. Are you not, perchance, in the habit of comparing yourselves with other *men*, who are at best but imperfect? In so doing, you degrade your own dignity as one created in the image of God! Your destiny is the highest imaginable—higher than ever philosopher or poet placed it. "Be ye holy, for I also am holy." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Does not a presentiment of this immeasurable destiny live in your soul too? and have you not the irrepressible feeling, that to be truly free, happy, acceptable to God, and like Him, you must be free from all sin?

Now we have seen that the strictest moralists, such as Kant, confess that no natural power can suffice for this; that even with the greatest moral energy in wrestling with evil your morality remains full of defects, and therefore your own exertions cannot satisfy the wants of your heart. And, on the other hand, in the person of Christ you see a moral grandeur, in which healthy eyes, at least, have been able to discover no blemish; an ideal of perfection respecting which even rationalistic critics have confessed that all human standards vanish before it. What, in view of this, is more reasonable than to conclude that you, poor, fettered, but struggling spirit—unable to free yourself, yet destined to the highest good—must, to attain your destiny, enter into a personal and living communion with the only perfect One who has appeared in the history of our race—with Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Man, the Sin-destroyer and Redeemer of the world? And this is the sum and substance of our Christian faith and Christian life! We believe that the free grace and mercy of God has come to the help of poor man, vainly struggling to free himself from sin and evil; and this great and all-sufficient Divine Help is Christ Jesus.

If you still wish to be your own saviour, beware lest you fall into a delusion as to the fatal power of the evil which is in you and its conquest. Such delusions may

flatter our human pride, but are belied by the actual experience of all straightforward men. But the hand of the Divine Redeemer has long been knocking at the door of your heart, in answer to all its anxious questionings and complaints, and if you now grasp this hand and intrust yourself to the guidance of the highest and purest Light that ever shone in this world, to the God of holiness and His saving grace in Christ, then this act of faith will be your greatest moral achievement: it will be in you a root of all the goodness and greatness attainable by man; you will receive with this act the Christian assurance of the Divine truth and immutability of your faith, because it substantially approves itself to your conscience in the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

These, in short, are the chief features of the "isagogic" method of treating unbelief in individuals. I consider it to be the best and most effective, because the most trenchant and impressive. Of course, however, it must be varied according to the measure of education which the individual has enjoyed, and especially according to his moral condition. The surest way to awaken a response in the other's breast is the personal testimony of grace received, which can throw itself and its spiritual experience into the scale, and stand surety for the truth of Christ's salvation. Another very important point, especially with scientifically directed minds, is to show them that, with their transposition of the relation between faith and knowledge, they will never escape riddles, and must, *nolens volens*, accept many things which are utterly without proof, or even absolutely inexplicable. Ay, we may go so far as to say that, without the facts of Biblical revelation, the enigmas of our existence, the world, the Church, and history, are increased tenfold. This indicates to us the weak point of

II. The Scientific Systems of Unbelief.

These, now-a-days, conduct themselves more than ever as if they represented science *par excellence*. They will hear of none but scientific arguments, and so against them none but a strictly *scientific* procedure can avail. From the very beginning the Church did not shrink from this struggle, and by means of it she constantly attained a clearer consciousness of the substantial elements of her own belief. Apology was the mother of dogmatical science. However great the harm may be which is done to whole generations by the systems of unbelief, yet it should be borne in mind that every earnest and honourable contest with scientific opponents has, in the end, always enriched the Church's store of truth, brought to light new weapons from her inexhaustible arsenal, and demonstrated afresh the steadfastness of the foundations of our faith. "Forward!" then, must be our motto, as against modern unbelieving science too. The hotter the battle, the more gainful its issue!

In answer to the question as to the best scientific methods of defence, I pass by all matters of detail (which will be separately treated of in our conferences), and will now endeavour to delineate the fundamental positions which we must take up, in order successfully to defend our faith, and at the same time to expose clearly the scientific and practical weakness of the opposing systems.

The first question is: How far does the ground extend which must under all circumstances be defended? Which are the absolutely indispensable articles of our Protestant Christian faith? This brings us to a point that is most important for our subject, and which it should be, especially in our days, the chief business of dogmatic theology to settle: I mean, the clear definition and limitation of the *essential and fundamental articles of our faith*, in contradistinction to those which are less important and may be left to the free judgment of each individual

Christian. In order to carry out its task, our science of defence must learn to treat minor points as such. He who defends too much, and represents doubtful things as absolutely necessary to be believed, will no more succeed than he who defends too little, *i.e.*, mere rational truths, instead of the heart of Christian belief. What is, then, the chief object of our defence as distinguished from others? Let me explain myself by means of an illustration.

In every considerable fortress there is a central bulwark or citadel, with various bastions, trenches, &c., the close connection of which forms the strength of this centre. Further out there is the *enceinte*, enclosing town and fortress with its moat; but the largest circle of all is formed by the outside forts, which hinder the enemy from approaching too near the walls. Our Christian faith is a fortress, strong as a rock, with just such defences. The central position, or citadel, is—as all believing theologians have long agreed—the redemption and atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ. Union of man with God through this Mediator is the end and aim of all Revelation. This central dogma of the atonement requires certain presuppositions and certain consequences —in respect both of God and man—which are absolutely indispensable if it is to stand firm.

The presuppositions are these: our naturally lost condition by reason of sin, notwithstanding the image of God originally implanted in man; and the saving will of God, caused by His merciful love, which carried out the atonement by means of the God-man, Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen, and thus crowned His revelation to the world by manifesting Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The consequences are: the appropriation of this work by the individual, objectively, through the Divinely appointed means furnished by the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, *i.e.*, the Word and the visible signs and seals of grace; subjectively, through repent-

ance and justifying faith; and, finally, the perfection of our salvation in the resurrection, last judgment, and eternal life, when the new creation of grace, or the ravages of sin in the heart, shall be made outwardly manifest.

These are, as it were, the bastions of the centre in back and front, the properly so-called fundamental truths, a strong chain, in which no link can be dispensed with, and hence the chief object to be defended. The *enceinte* with its moat is the doctrine of Holy Scripture, as the record of Divine Revelation, inexplicable if assumed to be the product of merely human authors, and hence both human and Divine, surrounding with the benignant influence of its living waters the citadel and town of our faith—*i.e.*, our Protestant Church—and making it a united fortress.

The remaining points—such as the various confessional details—respecting the two natures in Christ, the action of the sacraments, the relation of Divine grace to human freedom, and a hundred other things—may be left for decision to a truly Christian exegesis, historical investigation, and philosophical speculation, as long as the central truth of the God-man and His work, or the *soli Deo gloria*, is left untouched. These form, as it were, the outer forts, which should not, indeed, be given up prematurely, but from which a wise combatant will, in case of need, withdraw to the centre, in order not to exhaust his strength, but to defend this more securely. The fortress is not conquered, though one of the outposts should fall into the enemy's hands; nor, indeed, should even one of his missiles injure a stone of the *enceinte*.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not say that it may not be in a man's power, nor his duty, to defend many outworks. I do so myself; and merely insist on this, that successful defence must remain conscious of the difference between what belongs to the circumference and to the

centre, and may not make a non-essential article of faith a condition of salvation. The true method is that which will not allow a grain of saving truth to escape its grasp, which gives to faith what belongs to it, but also does not withhold from freedom its due.

We now proceed to consider the chief groups of our innumerable adversaries, and to ask after the best and most effectual line of scientific defence as against each one of them. We immediately see that our citadel, the Christian idea of God and of the redemption, is undermined and attacked chiefly by philosophy, the *enceinte* by historical criticism, and the outworks—but, in fact, the whole as well—by our modern natural science.

The chief maxim for our scientific defence to be drawn from the above is—without in the least timidly avoiding matters of detail—at once to reduce all isolated controversies to a difference in first principles, and to compare the views of the opponents, in all their consequences, with those of a Biblical Christianity. This will invariably result in an *idea of God*, and a *conception of evil* differing from that of the Bible. A distorted conception of God lies at the root, not only of the pantheistic and naturalistic systems, but also the attacks on the truth of the Gospel history, the Godhead of Christ, and the Divine origin of Christianity. And an unbiblical conception of sin and its consequences it is which forms the fundamental assumption of the attacks on the Christian doctrine of redemption and atonement, as well as on the Biblical anthropology.

These turning-points must decide the fate of the battle, and here we should take our stand. And first we should use the broad shield of the united and entire Christian view of the world; then with the sword attack the opponent's position, and fearlessly expose his weak and vulnerable points.

Thus we take our stand against—

1. *Unchristian philosophy*, by demonstrating the inner

logical consistency and unity, the harmony and symmetrical beauty of the Christian doctrinal system; the wisely planned and holy progress of the Divine Revelation, from the first creation to the restoration of all things. How sublime and yet how simply comprehensible, how suited to the deepest needs of our hearts, are the teachings of the Bible as to the Divine nature, as compared with the abstract, artificially twisted, incomprehensible, modern philosophical conceptions of God, which leave the heart entirely cold! At the same time, it should be shown—and this I would urgently recommend to the notice of apologists—how the isolated elements of truth contained in the non-Biblical conceptions of God converge in the Biblical doctrine, as in a focus, and how in the latter alone God appears as the All-perfect, in whom the idea of the Absolute is realised, while in the former there is always an important element wanting, either spirituality (as in Materialism), or self-consciousness (as in Pantheism), or the living, omnipresent activity (as in Deism): all of them elements indispensable to the complete conception of the Absolute.*

In all this our position will be a safer one, if we lean more upon the fundamental ideas contained in Scripture than upon terms from the dogmatic schools. This is especially true with reference to the point which philosophers delight to attack—the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Let us at once confess that the expression three *Persons* (which is not Biblical) may cause misunderstandings, since it is so easily confounded with three individuals; as St. Augustine himself has remarked, "tres Personæ, si ita dicendæ sunt;" and, moreover, that the expression *Trinity* is but an attempt at a short designation of a mystery, for the clear conception and designation of which in this life neither intellect nor

* Cf. the details of this argument in the author's work, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief* (Clark, Edinburgh). Lecture III. pp. 136–209.

language will ever be adequate. On the other hand, however, let us show how in the triune personality of God is contained both His true infinity and the possibility of His self-impartment in revelation: the true bridge between God and the world. For in this doctrine the unbending conception of abstract Monotheism has obtained vitality through the idea of a Divine Will of love. Hence this doctrine furnishes a preventive against the deification of nature, and is the only perfect bulwark of vital Theism in the idea of God as the highest plenitude of life and love, and it is only philosophical short-sightedness which can refuse this key to the great world-enigma, a key often well used by many a great philosopher. Only when this gulf between the Creator and the created is bridged over will the breach between man and man be closed. Here only have we a firm ground for the realisation of the idea of humanity, the brotherly unity and equality of all men as regards origin and destiny. This shows the immeasurable importance of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity for the world's culture, * a doctrine which is also remarkably attested by the history of heathen religions.

No less firmly and deeply founded should our position in these days be with regard to the defence of miracles. The negation of the miraculous proceeds partly from a false idea of God, partly from an incorrect, mechanical conception of the world; and, we may add, for the most part from the arbitrary assumption that, because no miracles happen nowadays, none have ever happened. If God be, as we Christians believe, a free, personal, extra-mundane Will, whose influence, nevertheless, is omnipresent throughout the whole creation, then the approach to every point of this creation must be always open to Him, and this necessitates the possibility of miracles. Doubtless the created world is relatively in-

* Cf. Hundeshagen, *Die Natur und geschichtliche Entwickelung der Humanitätsidee.*

dependent; but can the laws of nature—which only act by God's good pleasure—form a barrier for Him, when, in pursuance of the highest moral and religious ends, it is His will to use extraordinary means? You talk of a "breach of the laws of nature." But first of all tell me, what limit is there to the intensification of natural forces by the power of the Divine Will? And does not the product of the miracle immediately subject itself to the ordinary course of nature? You object that miracles would rend the world's economy asunder. Ay, but the first great rent in the original order and harmony was made not by God, but by the sin of man. The abnormal development of our freedom cannot only bear, but imperatively demands the salutary interference of God as a work of pity and love. Miracles, therefore, do not unnaturally destroy true nature, but supernaturally heal distorted nature. Instead of, as formerly was customary, using isolated miracles as apologetic arguments, we should assign to each miracle, according to its evident dispensational aim, a place in the great organic plan of salvation, the living heart of which is Christ.

You object, finally, that no miracles occur at the present day. But cannot and must not the periods of the Church's birth and of its growth be governed by somewhat different laws? Cast a glance into the history of modern missions, and you will see how, at this very day, in the course of founding new churches, things happen which remind us of the Apostolic times.

Having thus shielded the Christian belief in God and His personal relation to the world from infidel assaults, let us grasp the sword and attack the weak points of our opponents, by demonstrating the scientific untenableness of their principles. What is Atheism but an arbitrary denial of the universal and immediate certainty of the existence of God, a certainty necessarily following from the conditioned character of our self-consciousness, which we feel to be dependent on an

absolutely Higher Being? This view is without any deep insight into the nature of the factors which constitute our own consciousness, and it is condemned by the fact of the universality of religion. What is Materialism but an audacious hypothesis, an unsuccessful attempt to explain the whole complex of our thought, the origin of our self-consciousness, nay, even our moral ideas, as a product of sensuous perception and the action of matter? Does it not—in doing away with the freedom of the will and individual responsibility—practically destroy all the moral elements of our life, and render the idea of a spiritual and moral progress illusory? And Pantheism, too—to say nothing of all its other foibles—does it not manifestly move in a logical circle so soon as it endeavours to bring the principle which it presupposes (whether it be the "substance" of Spinoza, or the "absolute Idea" of Hegel) into relation with the world-matter as its *causa efficiens?* God is supposed ever to be evolving the world from Himself, and yet He is only realised in its development. Where, in this case, is the *ratio sufficiens* of the reality of the world, and especially of our self-consciousness? and where is there an absolute final purpose in this eternal aimless circuit of the universe?

And with what unnatural limitations of the conceptions of God do we meet in the case of Deism and Rationalism! How do they deprive God of His true vitality and divinity, just as much as they do the world of its dependence as a creature! And do not these systems—by their denial of a special Divine Providence—take the innermost nerve out of all moral and religious action, and remove the true key to the understanding of the world's or of individual history?

While acknowledging the isolated elements of truth contained in these systems, we draw the general conclusion, that by their endeavours naturally to explain the world's enigmas they only multiply them; and that they

expect us to believe things much more repugnant to reason and conscience than the Scriptures with all their miracles; *e.g.*, a self-creative world-matter; the origin by self-development of the first organisms; the self-emancipation of man from the condition of an ape, &c. He who doubts and denies where he ought to believe will often have to believe implicitly where critical doubts would be most fitting. Thus Strauss, in his last and most radical work, "The Old and the New Belief," has found himself compelled to bow to the most uncertain hypotheses of modern scientists.

Finally, we may embarrass these opponents by inquiring as to the positive and solid results of their speculations. We are very far from wishing to deny the general merits of philosophy. But, we ask, where are the tangible results arrived at by the philosophy which is hostile to Christianity, and which alone we are considering here? Has it finally solved any fundamental question? How have the different systems during their various changes struggled with and overthrown one another, while the simple Gospel remains, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!" Or is it possible that mere philosophical speculation could be its own aim, apart from any useful results? No; every science which is not *scientia ad praxin—i.e.*, which does not bear fruit for our life—is inwardly unhealthy, and no longer nourishes, but only puffs up the spirit.

And what is the present condition of philosophy? Since the systems of "absolute Idealism" have utterly broken down, and the reaction against them has led men into the slough of materialism, philosophy is at a loss. The one party loudly cries that we must return to the old teacher, Kant; others wearily labour to arouse some interest by means of historical representations of past systems, by excursions into the history of literature, or into the natural scientific research of the day. Others, however—and these it is who most attract the world's

attention—draw from all that has gone before an awful conclusion, and before the astonished world hoist the banner—or rather let me say the distress-signal—of the most extreme Pessimism. Schopenhauer sees in all existence nothing but misery and suffering, and can find true happiness only in self-dissolution into an absolutely empty nothing, the Nirvana of the Buddhists. And Edward von Hartmann, who, in his rapidly sold work on the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (a book of which I shall certainly not deny that it has some real merits), exhibits to us the workings of this great "Unconscious" in the corporeal and spiritual world; declares it to be a mistake that a world should ever have sprung into existence at all, and even an inexcusable crime if it had been created by a self-conscious God. All hope of happiness in this or in another stage of the world's history is, according to Hartmann, a pure illusion: before us stands the senile age of mankind, in which, after all hope has died away, our race "finally abandoned all claim to positive happiness, and only yearns for absolute painlessness; for the Nothing, Nirvana."

Thus far have our most recent philosophers advanced. On the tree of knowledge they now show us, with strange aptitude, the seductively beautiful and variegated tints of autumn,—tokens of despair and utter hopelessness, which, with silent eloquence, once more proclaim, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Are not such views, I boldly ask, the most striking proof that it is only that which Divine Revelation gives and promises to man which makes his life worth living? Here, again, we clearly see that the faith of the Christian is, in the last resort, the only star of hope amidst the gloom of our existence; aye, the only protection of our moral dignity. Boldly, my Christian friends, let us attack our opponents on this weak point, which is fitted more than any other to discredit unchristian philosophy in the eyes of all who feel their deeper needs. Let us show the

world that it is not Christianity, but the Antichristian philosophy which finally degrades the dignity of man; that this dignity in its fulness flourishes only on the soil of Divine Revelation, that it is only possible as a deduction from the Christian conception of God, and only to be realised by the Christian plan of salvation; and hence that any unbelieving substraction from the fundamental Biblical views of God and the Divine destiny of man must lead to an idea of man and the mundane process which most deeply degrades us in our capacity of spiritual and moral beings. For in all naturalistic and pantheistic systems, what is the world's history but "the Golgotha of the Absolute Spirit; the fearfully tragic slaughter-house in which all individual life and happiness is sacrificed only that the development of the universe may go forward undisturbed,"* and the philosophers who march behind may be able to mark and admire the rhythmic movement of the "Idea" through Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis?

Vainly do we dream of man's personal and living value, and nourish a living hope! And inexorable is the dilemna which we see before us: either to receive Him who says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," or, rejecting Him, to choose our portion with those other spirits, the most honest of whom must needs declare, "I am the Way, the Truth, and—Death!"

For the scientific defence of our faith against—

2. *Destructive historical criticism*, I would recommend the following measures to insure a firm position:—

Above all, do not let us place unnecessary difficulties in our own way, and furnish our adversaries with dangerous weapons, by an exaggerated theory of inspiration, which, in its equal application to all the books of our present Canon, can be justified neither by Scripture nor by historical evidence. The very limits of our Canon are not an ordinance of Divine right, inasmuch

* Hegel.

as no prophet ever declared the list of inspired Old Testament writings closed in the name of God; and no apostle superintended the collection of the New Testament books. But must not the Spirit, who leadeth into all truth, have guided those who had to decide as to the limits of the canon, in order to insure genuine tradition of saving truth to the later world? As a proof with what correct judgment they acted, we should adduce the fact of the startling difference in spirituality which exists between canonical and apocryphal, or, indeed, all non-canonical writings, even those of the centuries next after the Apostolic Age. Herein the Canon shows itself to be a unique and compact whole.

And from this inner spirit of these writings let us draw the chief argument for the inspiration and normative authority of the Scriptures. The Protestant Church considers the testimony of the Holy Ghost to be the chief criterion of canonicity. First of all, then, we defenders should regard the Scriptures as a whole, and proceed to show how they form a compact organism, although the different authors wrote at such long intervals; how they record the progress of Revelation, unfolding, step by step, in history, doctrine, and prophecy, the Divine plan of salvation from the world's beginning to its end, and withal, in a simple sententious style, pregnant with meaning; how they everywhere breathe, in a greater or less measure, the spirit of sacred earnestness, and all tend to one great purpose—the honour of God and the welfare of mankind. What a fulness of light and life is contained in them, like a spring flowing throughout all ages! What wondrous all-sufficiency for every need, every age, and every stage of knowledge! how infinitely above all mere human products! At the same time, attention should be drawn to the regenerating influences of the Bible in the case of individuals, as of entire nations, to the self-manifestation of its Divine truths in the heart and conscience of

the reader or hearer. How can all this be explained without the fact of inspiration?

This criterion of the inward testimony of the Spirit must be kept free from all subjective arbitrariness by its objective corroboration, according to the "analogy of faith," with respect to the several books; and by a historical criticism (in addition to this inner one) as to their actual origin. The testimony of the Holy Ghost and the Church, the attributes of freedom from error, sufficiency, and perfection, pertain primarily to the Canon as a whole.

This objective criterion of the analogy of our faith was clearly enunciated by Luther, who says: "The right touchstone whereby a Christian man may try all books (of Scripture) is, that he inquire whether they treat of Christ or not, forasmuch as all Scripture telleth of Him." We must look at and defend Scripture from its central point, Christ, by applying the above-mentioned central truths, in which all Scripture coincides, as a criterion in judging of the value and authority of the various books and portions. To this kernel of the Scriptures, and this only, does the Holy Spirit bear witness in the hearts of believers, and grants in respect of it an immediate and unmovable certainty.

In matters of detail we should not forget that the Divine Revelation in Scripture is vouchsafed to us in a form not purely Divine, but at the same time human; and that even St. Paul distinguishes what he has received from the Lord from that which is merely his own opinion as well-meant counsel coming from one who has the Spirit of the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 23; vii. 10, 25, 40), and that there is certainly an important difference between a portion of Scripture, the author of which distinctly describes his utterances to a direct Divine Revelation or command, and one which is entirely silent on this point. Do not let us forget that no theory of inspiration—however convenient this might seem to many—can dispense

us from the duty of a reverent criticism of Scripture, a criticism which must extend not only to texts and translations, but also to a searching comparison of the different types of doctrine (*e.g.*, Pauline, Johannean, &c.), and of the various ethnographical, historical, and other data, with one another and with profane history. And if this criticism should here and there discover later additions, interpolations, chronological discrepancies, and the like, to such we may well apply the words of Luther: "If there be found a strife in Scripture, and the same cannot be settled, let it alone; it is of little moment, so as it runneth not counter to the articles of our faith." We must not be too timid in such matters. If we indeed believe Christianity to be the revelation of the absolute truth, then an isolated truth may occur when and how it pleases; it cannot be dangerous, but, in the end, only helpful to the Christian faith. What cannot be denied need not be feared!

But if criticism seeks to cast suspicion on the whole for the sake of a few isolated discrepancies, or it arbitrarily attempts to measure the substance of Revelation by mere human standards, then it becomes destructive, and then we must draw a hard and sharp line against its false pretensions.

Above all things, we demand that *sancta sancte tractentur*, with the becoming reverence, with an upright and humble desire for truth. He who will not let himself be apprehended by the spirit of Scripture, will never comprehend its contents. Spiritual things must be spiritually judged. Scripture, therefore, must be meted with its own measure. To apply the standards of merely natural and human events to the self-revealing actions of God is to begin by doing violence to Scripture. This is the fundamental error of all false rationalistic criticism.

Our first step in opposing this practice is, to expose the false principle on which it rests. Since the days of

the Tübingen School, this criticism has arrogated to itself the title of historical, though it is often only philosophical. It claims to examine with historical impartiality, and is often from the first biassed by arbitrary philosophical assumptions. These men approach the records of Christianity, imbued with a pantheistic or rationalistic aversion to the miraculous, with the intention of rendering the supernatural facts recorded therein as merely human as possible—by means of connecting them with and deriving their origin from contemporary historical phenomena—and of acknowledging as historically certain only what is perfectly transparent and intelligible to them, because it does not exceed man's capacity; just as if God the Lord could not make history with His deeds, which far transcend our comprehension —He who is the Cause and Aim of all history! This, in good sooth, is not impartial historical investigation, but rather the result of looking through highly distorted philosophical spectacles!

This criticism cannot, however, compass its ends without innumerable *coups de force* and unbounded arbitrariness. And this is the second quarter to which our scientific defence has to direct its attacks. To say nothing of the way in which the rationalists and Baur have distorted the specific nature of Christianity, we would merely point out how the efforts of the latter and his disciples have been directed towards transferring the origin of Christianity as the universal religion from Christ and the first Apostles to the authorship of St. Paul, just as if the latter had not openly declared that he did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus (2 Cor. iv. 5), and that no man can lay another foundation than that which is laid (1 Cor. iii. 11)—as if one who declares even an angel to be accursed if he preach another Gospel than that of Christ (Gal. i. 8), would not indignantly have declined the fame of inventing a new Christianity!

In order to deprive the founder of Christianity of His

specific dignity as the Son of God, this false criticism has, as we all know, endeavoured to turn His miracles into natural events or myths, and to give His testimonies and teachings respecting Himself the impress of fabrications and opinions of a later age ; and especially to cast a slur upon His absolute sinlessness. As if it were not impossible—witness even the confession of a Rousseau—to invent such a picture of Christ as that which the Gospels give us ! As if—even supposing all four Gospels to be spurious—the four unimpeached Epistles of St. Paul were not enough to prove clearly the God-manhood and the perfectly holy mediatory character of the Crucified and Risen One ! And as if even the most arbitrary criticisms of the Gospels had not left as genuine some self-testimonies of Christ, in which He lays claims to attributes which positively exceed any mere human standard, *e.g.*, in the passages which relate to His second coming as the Judge of the world ! Here we see criticism reach the crowning point of arbitrariness, and talk of "fanaticism" and "unjustifiable self-glorification" (Strauss). Be it so ; but let these critics bear the crushing burden of bringing evidence which may give us the faintest glimmering of an understanding how such serious moral and intellectual defects could co-exist in the same individual with otherwise perfect sobriety, clearness, and quietness of His words and actions, and with the lofty moral dignity of His whole nature. Is it not wholly absurd, we ask, to suppose that the religion of humility and love could have taken its origin from a fanatic so eaten up by pride ? But if Christ uttered these testimonies of Himself, like all His other words, with deliberation and truth, then He must be the one for whom the Church has ever taken Him—the only-begotten Son of the living God.

Time would fail us to detail all the futile blows which this criticism has dealt against the New Testament history, the most flagrant of which were the efforts (finally

given up by Baur himself) to explain naturally the conversion of St. Paul, at the cost of making him an utterly inexplicable psychological monstrosity, or even an epileptic! I would only remind you what a firm barrier we have against all such attacks in passages like 2 Cor. xii. 12, where St. Paul, in an Epistle confessedly genuine, appeals to his signs and wonders and mighty deeds before those under whose eyes they had taken place. And, I ask, would not a writer who asserts such things of himself be utterly demented if he were not perfectly certain that they were true?

All these attacks based on an aversion to the miraculous, and especially the denial of the Resurrection, may be consigned to a well-merited grave by the one unanswerable argument: You can never explain the enigma of primitive Christian belief, its world-conquering power, and its world-regenerating effects, nor the existence of the Christian Church itself, if Christ was not and did not do what the Gospels tell of Him. By trying to explain primitive Christian history as a chain of merely natural occurrences, you turn it upside down, and make it an insoluble enigma. By your denial of the superhuman element in Christ, and especially of His resurrection, you are compelled to seek the mainspring of so immense a movement as that of Christianity in persons, circumstances, and relations which cannot bear the weight of such a superstructure; and in the end you ask us to believe that the kingdom of Truth took its origin from misunderstanding, error, self-deception, and dishonesty! The logical law of the sufficing cause makes all your efforts vain.

At this point we may call attention to the inwardly inevitable process, in which this criticism often overleaps itself, and not seldom becomes utterly absurd. Thus, no sooner had Strauss endeavoured to derive the chief motive of the myths ascribed by him to the primitive disciples and churches, from the idea then current among

the Jews as to the Messiah, than Bruno Bauer trod on his heels, declaring that the idea of the Messiah, as far as regards its existence before the rise of Christianity, is also a myth! Again, after many critics have, for years, doubted the truth of the reports of the Resurrection, there comes a writer called Noack, and informs us that Christ was crucified, not in Jerusalem, but on Mount Gerizim!

Hence negative criticism has been considerably beaten back upon several points. Just compare the present state of results in the criticism of the Gospels with that of a few decades since. The Synoptics, which had then been pushed onward into the second century, have already step by step, been brought back into the first. Even in the question as to the time when the Gospel of St. John was written, the Critical School has receded from the year 160 (Baur) to the beginning of the second century (Keim 100-117), *i.e.*, a time when St. John may still have been alive. And if Keim, in a recent work, declares that the prevailing theology of the day cannot, without sacrificing the truth, ascribe to this Gospel a direct historical value, he thereby shows that he himself does not object to sacrifice the truth, which is that at the present day more than ever the ascription of its authorship to St. John is being defended not only by such critics as Ewald, Düsterdieck, Meyer, Riggenbach, Van Oosterzee, Godet, but even by Weizäcker, Ritschl, and others.*

That favourite instance of our opponents, the inner relation of the Synoptics to the fourth Gospel, has far less weight, since the fact has been generally recognised that a superhuman view of Christ's person cannot possibly be ignored as contained in the first three Gospels To say nothing of the account of our Lord's childhood

* And most lately of all against Keim and Scholten, by Leuschner in his work, *Das Evangelium St. Johannis, und seine neuesten Widersacher*. 1873.

(the authenticity of which has lately been convincingly proved by Steinmeyer *), we have passages such as Matt. xi. 27 ("All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: no man knoweth the Son but the Father," &c., cf. Luke x. 22), respecting which even a critic like Reuss confesses that "the whole of St. John's Gospel is, as it were, but a circumscription of these utterances." And the works of our day on New Testament doctrinal teaching show that all the germs of the Pauline and Johannean doctrines are contained in the words of our Lord.†

Another help against the caprice of criticism, and the scientific light-mindedness with which it often seizes on mere isolated notices from profane history as proof positive against the Scriptural accounts, is often afforded by the most recent archæological research. I would remind you, *e.g.*, of the proofs for the truth of many facts recorded respecting Egyptian history in Genesis and Exodus, which have lately been furnished by Ebers,‡ in the interests not of Christian faith, but of science, and the deciphering of old Chaldaic inscriptions respecting the flood by Mr. G. Smith, of London. But especially I would refer you to E. Schrader's late work,§ in which a number of the notices scattered throughout the Old Testament, respecting the history of the Assyro-Babylonian Empire and the Assyrian monuments (from the tower in the plain of Shinar, down to the fall of Babylon), are remarkably confirmed, even in their details; so much so that Egyptologists have been corrected by Assyrologists in respect of their chronology where it differs from that of Scripture. Have we not, then, a right to say with Gellius: "*Obscuritates non*

* *Die Geschichte der Geburt des Herrn, und seiner ersten Schritte im Leben.* 1873.

† Cf. Bernhard Weiss, *Lehrbuch der Biblischen Theologie des neuen Testaments.* 2nd edition.

‡ *Ægypten und die Bücher Mosis.* I. Bd., 1868.

§ *Die Keilinschriften und das alte Testament.* 1872.

assignemus culpæ scribentium, sed inscitiæ non assequentium?"

In such questions the scientific defence of our faith must not shirk the trouble of going into details, for it is in these that negative criticism seeks its strength. But the representatives of the latter should be shown how often they make small differences into great contradictions; how they endeavour, by means of uncertain hypotheses, to decide questions which it is impossible to settle authoritatively; how often they give themselves the air of being able precisely to characterise the inner development of an author or of his age, so as to be justified, in the case of certain differences between earlier and later writers, to deny the possibility of their originating from the same man. What they announce as a "certain result of theological science," not seldom, in truth, owes its origin to subjective taste and arbitrary choice. They are far too little conscious of the limits to real scientific demonstration; and often, when they suppose that they have produced the *ne plus ultra* of scientific acuteness, it is but a flight in the airy regions of imagination. Truly, often "much learning hath made them mad."

In view of all this, we must protest aloud against the arrogance of this modern theological school, especially against the manner in which they present to the public in popular exegetical works—cf., *e.g.*, "Die Protestantenbibel neuen Testaments," a work now appearing under the auspices of the *Protestantenverein*—as Gospel truth, "the ascertained results of historical and Biblical investigation;" while these are accepted only by a minority of theologians, and many of them men of waning credit. And if they go so far as to give themselves credit for being the promoters of greater life in the Church, they should be clearly shown how miserably unpractical and insufficient their stand-point is to attain this end; how, by their denial of inspiration, they utterly destroy the

living interest of the mass of men in the Bible, by changing it into a merely historical and literary interest. Not a few students of theology are, by means of this method of treating, or rather maltreating Scripture, becoming thoroughly disgusted with the study of exegesis.

Finally, we should seek to deprive this school of criticism of the charm of novelty. What more is it—with its resolution of actual facts into mere insipid religious ideas—than a new edition of the old Gnosticism? And will it not die away just as this did, if it offers for the religious need of the Christian people evaporating ideas or crumbling stones, instead of the living Bread from Heaven? This school, indeed, seeks to retain Christ as an ideal. But can a mere idea redeem the world? Sin, unhappily, is a mighty reality, and only Divine realities can overcome it. This is the true reason why, as long as there are sinners in need of salvation, the world cannot give up the Word of Life.

Our defence against the attacks of

3. *Modern anti-miraculous natural science* will have to be conducted in a somewhat similar manner, since its principle of the denial of the miraculous is identical with that of the destructive critical school. Darwin and his followers are working out the same fundamental idea as Baur and his disciples, viz., to bridge over by natural means all the chasms in history and nature, so as to get rid of all supernatural agencies. And both schools, though originally quite independent of one another, have at length happily met in the person of Strauss, as we see in his last work, "The Old and New Belief."

In order to maintain a firm position against the attacks of natural science, we must first consider the purpose for which the Scriptures, as a whole, were given, and thus draw a sharp line between this aim and that of scientific investigation.

The aim of Scripture is to show us the way of salvation, and this it does by communicating religious and moral truths, which the apprehension of man, darkened as it is by sin, could never have discovered by itself. But in no respect is Scripture intended to play the part of a hand-book of natural history or philosophy, or to give us physical information which is of no essential importance for our faith. The Bible should not, therefore, be called upon as arbiter in questions of pure natural science, which do not in the least affect morals or faith. Not even the highest inspiration could have been intended to lift the Biblical writers above the view of nature current in their day, or to give them the clear insight into natural science, which was reserved as a reward for the patient toil of later generations. Its purpose was to enable them to enunciate the truths of Divine Revelation, as far as they were connected with physical relations, in a form which should not militate against the objective truth of these relations, and should leave room for all future discoveries in that region. For this reason the Bible speaks of natural phenomena simply in the language of every-day life, which gives impressions as they are received.

Certainly, however, Scripture, in its enunciation of religious truths, cannot altogether avoid touching on physical ground, especially in the history of creation. But where it does enter upon the region of nature, it only does so as far as is absolutely necessary to ground and establish our faith—to instruct man as to his true destiny, and to make way for correct notions of the relation of God to the world, while excluding all false ones. Thus Materialism and Naturalism, as well as Pantheism and Emanationism, are equally excluded. Then the physical processes are fragmentarily sketched in a few bold strokes, as far as they are necessary to form the basis of the history of Revelation, to which the record forthwith proceeds. Evidently, then, this record is by

no means complete from a physical point of view. On the contrary, innumerable questions are left open, to be answered by our investigation. But in no case are physical relations brought in for their own sake.* Entire silence is kept on all points which do not form part of the foundation of religious truth. How few physical details do the first and second chapters of Genesis contain in comparison with heathen cosmogonies !

It is important to remark the distinction that, while the statement of religious truth is always precise and clear, that of physical facts is so broad and general, that room is left for all later discoveries of details. Indeed, they are given in such a shape as to unfold their hidden truths with the advances of science †—and this, I think, is no small proof of their inspiration. Take, *e.g.*, the creation of light on the first, and the sun not until the fourth day—for which statement the Bible cosmogony has been ridiculed by innumerable infidels, from Celsus down to Strauss. How brilliantly has this been justified by modern natural science, which has shown that the earth possesses light in itself, and did so, probably, in a far greater degree at the time when the trees now found in the coal-beds were growing; for these have no annual rings, a fact which points to the conclusion that the earth did not then derive her light from the sun, and consequently had no change of seasons. These and other data of modern discovery enable us to appreciate the delicate distinction between light (אוֹר) Gen. i. 3, and "light bearers," v. 14 (מְאֹרוֹת). For our expositors are beginning to see that the latter of these verses does apply to the first creation of sun and moon, but only to the completion of their creation when they were placed in their present relative position to the earth as its "light-bearers." And light itself is now attributed to

* Cf. Reusch, *Bibel und Natur*, 3te Aufl., p. 34.

† Cf. S. Garratt, *Veins of Silver*, chap. I: "Inspired Words and Unfolding Truths."

the undulations of ether, which would account for its not being created, but merely called forth from the chaos to exist in a separate form. Physical discoveries will often prove to be keys to the understanding of Scriptural data, and show how these could not possibly have been furnished by their authors without Divine enlightenment. But we must not be too quick in the interpretation of such passages, and, above all, not make Scripture say things which it does not distinctly enunciate. "How often," as Whewell truly says,* "has one thought himself to be defending a Scriptural truth, when he was merely fighting for an interpretation of his own, which was presently shown to be false!"

If we have drawn a limit, beyond which the appeal to Scriptural authority should not go, we must also indicate the bounds of natural science as against religious teaching. We must, from the first, take exception to the claims of natural scientists, when they ignore all religious and moral truths, and apply to incommensurable magnitudes the standard of mathematics; when they commit the absurdity of making our belief in the supersensuous and spiritual world dependent on the results of microscopic or telescopic researches; when they go beyond the investigation of present phenomena, and pretend to give an authentic account of the processes by which the world originated—processes which are entirely out of the reach of exact investigation, and only permit of speculative theories; and when they will not acknowledge the fundamental fallacy of all naturalistic theories as to the world's origin, viz., that they make the present order of things the criterion of the process of creation, and will not acknowledge the influence of other forces than those which are still at work. In all this natural science oversteps its limits, and argues from analogies which we cannot allow.

If, however, both sides keep within the limits of their respective tasks, then they must necessarily be united

* *History of the Inductive Sciences*, i., p. 403.

at last. If the Bible and Nature both contain a Revelation from God, they cannot really contradict one another. Where this would seem to be the case, it is because either God's words or His works have been misinterpreted. In such a case we must not immediately cast away the Word, in order not to give offence to the cultivated, but quietly wait for a reconciliation; again examine the exegesis of the passage in question; but at the same time see whether natural scientists are not giving us doubtful conjectures, in which they have often been mistaken, instead of really certain results.

This is all the easier for us, from the fact that there have always been distinguished natural scientists who did not believe in the possibility of a contradiction between the Bible and Nature, from pious patriarchs of science, like Copernicus, Newton, and Kepler, down to men of our own day, like A. von Haller, Euler, Littrow, Von Schubert, Wagner, Röper, in Germany; or Buckland, Hugh Miller, Sir John Herschel, Brewster, Whewell, in England; or Cuvier, Lavoisier, Marcel de Serres, La Faye, &c., in France.

Indeed, we can answer the contempt with which the science of the day looks down upon Holy Scripture, by pointing to a number of important matters in which a union has been effected, or at least made way for. As far as we know the chief stages of the earth's development, they agree in point of order with the six days' work of Genesis i. The fact that a fluid state of the earth's crust preceded the formation of the mountains answers to the description of the second day. The first numerous appearance of the terrene flora in the comparatively early coal-period, and the later appearance *en masse* of the terrene fauna in the tertiary period, corresponds in its chief features to the second, third, fifth, and sixth days. Astronomy, again, has proved in a startling manner, by means of the spectral analysis, the unity of the Cosmos, and the near rela-

tionship which the elements of the other celestial bodies bear to those of the solar system. We begin to see proof positive for Cuvier's far-seeing utterance: "Moses has left us a cosmogony, the exactitude of which is confirmed day by day in an admirable manner." With regard, moreover, to the biblical computation of the age of the human race, some geologists and palæontologists (*e.g.*, Quenstedt) are declaring that, according to the newest data, the period of about six thousand years is in all probability correct. And, finally, modern astronomy and physics decidedly support the probability of the cessation in due time of the motion of our solar system, and the destruction of the earth through the exhaustion of the forces hitherto at work.

No wonder that, as things stand, a considerable number of theologians declare the harmony between Scripture and science to be complete, or at least capable of becoming so. And we may at least gather, as the result of their efforts, the declaration that an ideal harmony in respect of the chief features may be established without doing violence to either side.

Meanwhile, truth demands that we should confess that this harmony at present does not extend to all details; *e.g.*, theologians are not agreed as to whether the days of Genesis i. may be stretched out so as to meet the requirements of the immeasurably long period postulated by geology. The first specimens (not the masses) of the different stages of creation do not, as far as scientific research has extended, follow strictly in the order of the six days, for the lowest plants and the lowest animals appear almost simultaneously in the geological strata; and to bring all the data in the Scriptural account of the deluge into accordance with the present results of science would be rather difficult.

But may we not hope for a future solution of these difficulties, seeing that neither exegesis nor, still less, natural science, are by any means complete? God does

not grant to one generation to solve all enigmas: coming ones will have to work at them, too. But the measure of corroboration hitherto afforded by science to Scripture gives us a right to treat with well-merited contempt the ridicule cast upon Scripture by so many scientists.

And as against such attacks we may proceed to point out the foibles of natural science, which she has of late often exhibited with the rashness of youth, especially in her younger departments.

How categorically, *e.g.*, was the volcanic theory in geology pronounced to be the only true one, in opposition to the Neptunian, and how much has it been modified and compelled to adopt elements of the latter, by the chemical investigations of Fuchs, Schafhäutl, Bischof, and others ! * What uncertainty is shown in the calculations of geologists—*e.g.*, as to the time required for the cooling of the earth's crust ; their estimates differing, not by thousands, but by millions of years ! How much jugglery, in fact, has been carried on by natural scientists, in respect of enormous numbers ! How often have they endeavoured to give their calculations as to the formation of the different strata a learned gloss by mounting to millions of years ! And now sober investigators are, on the ground of careful observations, beating a retreat; and, instead of the favourite millions of years usually held up to the astonished public, are computing much more moderate periods. The age of the mammoth, the great bear, and the reindeer, which scientists (especially Frenchmen) have been trying to separate by thousands of years, are now by thorough investigations, like that of Fraas, placed quite close together. And the lake dwellings, too; how has their origin been relegated to immemorable antiquity, in order to throw discredit on the Biblical account of man ! And now scientists are beginning to turn up their noses at the idea of the stone,

* Proving, amongst other things, that the formation of quartz could only have originated from the action of water.

bronze, and iron ages being strictly successive epochs; so that we may confidently assert that none of these remains extend back more than a few centuries beyond Cæsar, and hence are not even older than historical times. And so, after all, the six thousand years of the Bible are not so utterly insufficient to accommodate all the remains of ancient civilisation. But in what hot haste were scientists at the time to spread these now exploded notions in all kinds of popular publications!

Without heeding the outcry of the scientific rabble against our "vulgar belief,"* let us quietly expose before the eyes of our flocks this mode of proceeding, and let us show them how large a portion of scientific "knowledge" is based only upon grounds of likelihood, which may very well some day give way.

And how has our task been lightened in the chief controversy of our day—that as to the origin of man—by the extravagances which naturalists would have had us believe. Our firm defence of the Biblical doctrine is this: That the derivation of man's existence as a religious and moral being from the creative act of God, who formed him in His own likeness, and destined him to attain to it, agrees so clearly with our whole moral and religious self-consciousness, with the historical development of the human race, and with the personal experience of all true Christians, that it is the only reasonable doctrine, and alone worthy of man's dignity. We need but place it side by side with the scientific fancies of former times on this subject, now often ridiculed by sober naturalists themselves, and the choice will not be a hard one.

But the controversy has assumed a more serious aspect since Darwin and his school have endeavoured to connect the genealogy of man with the highest mammals, viz., the anthropoid apes. The counterproof is not our affair, but that of savants by profession. Fortunately, the most

* "Köhlerglaube," an opprobrious epithet applied by German infidels to the Christian faith.

recent discussion of the question seems unfavourable to the relationship.* But, even supposing the outward differences were proved to be ever so small, would not the present intellectual and moral (to say nothing of the religious) condition of man, notwithstanding the small superiority in his organism, be all the more a riddle ? No representation of the psychical processes in inferior animals, their instincts, notions, memory, &c., however it may sublimate them, will be able to disprove that in this respect the lower animals have made no progress for the last several thousand years ; that they have never discovered the inner laws of these phenomena, nor have been able to distinguish their individual Ego from their momentary condition.

For such facts—and this is our firm position of defence —there is no other explanation than this, that in the soul-life of the beast there is no comprehension of the individual Ego ; there is no self-consciousness of the spirit distinguishing itself from its isolated affections, functions, conditions, as well as from all objects without it. And this is the specific distinction, the impassable gulf between man and beast. The same is no less absolute from a moral point of view: on the one hand we see free, personal, self-determining life ; on the other the iron rule of nature's law, by means of sensual affections and instincts. Even millions of years, and the innumerably minute stages of progress which naturalists postulate, can never bridge over the chasm which divides the natural from the moral law. And if these men (and Strauss also) flatter themselves that it is the greatest possible honour for man to have raised himself from the depths of animal life to the present height of moral consciousness, we reply: If man is, as you say, a mere creature of nature, then all that he does takes place by virtue of

* Witness the defeat of Carl Vogt at the Stuttgart Conference of Natural Scientists (autumn, 1872) by Virchow, Luschka, and others at the head of a large majority.

absolutely binding natural laws, and it is no merit in him thus to have raised himself, since he could not help it. Unless our moral consciousness proceeds from an absolutely good and holy will of God, all our moral ideas are merely conventional and changeable, and there is no such thing as good and evil *per se*. Thus all morality is radically destroyed, and it becomes evident that he who believes in a generic difference between the morally good and evil must also believe in the specific pre-eminence and Divine origin of man.

Similar moral arguments obtain against those who deny the homogeneous descent of the human race from a single pair. He who tears asunder the human race in its origin makes the different branches of it enemies instead of brothers, and destroys with their consanguinity the last bond of mutual love and esteem.

The physiologists, however, who maintain this* may fight our battle against the Darwinists; for, if the latter are trying to annihilate every boundary between the species, the former make demarcations where, according to Scripture, none exist. We may quietly allow our opponents to direct their attacks against each other, till the truth which lies in the middle alone remains. Darwinism may, perhaps, result in the reduction of the present multitude of species to considerably fewer principal types (which can only be favourable to the Biblical account of the Flood), but the weighty arguments of the polygenists will prevent these types from being annihilated. The latter class of naturalists should, however, remember that the question as to the origin of the human race is, in the last resort, a matter of history; and this science, as applied to languages and religions, is pointing with increasing probability to one original tribe, the cradle of which lay in Western Asia, so that the possibility of the Biblical theory is becoming more

* As Edwards, Forbes, Agassiz, Burmeister, and others.

and more established. Here, too, we may say, what God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

As things stand, we shall not join in the apprehension expressed by Schleiermacher, that natural science, when fully developed to a complete system of cosmology, might result in an intellectual starvation of theology. Nay—if I am not deceived—the relations between natural science and theology appear of late to have taken a turn for the better. This is because the stand-point on either side is beginning to become clearly marked. Many prudent and far-seeing natural philosophers have begun to acknowledge that their science has, in many cases, overstepped its boundaries, and therefore warn their younger or more hot-blooded colleagues to abstain from undue interference in other departments. May we, then, not nourish the hope that in due time both these bright stars shall revolve around a common centre, in mutual harmony and friendly rivalry discovering the great deeds of God?

But, besides these comparatively detailed methods of defence against the different scientific attacks, there remains to be considered the defence of our whole line against infidel theory and practice combined. For these tendencies are now showing themselves in practice and form as—

III. A growing Social Power in the Life of our Day both in Church and State.

This form of unbelief is, without question, far more dangerous than infidelity in individuals or in philosophical systems. I would recommend, in this respect, a double method of defence. First, a more negative one, which has hitherto been carried on only sporadically, but which, in order to take due effect, should be treated as a whole: viz., *an exposure of the miserable consequences of infidelity as shown in history*, in contra-

distinction to the wholesome effects of healthy Christian faith. This may be called the *historical method* of defence; it is, however, at the same time a cutting attack. Our Lord Himself pointed it out when He said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii. 16); and the proof of the actual corruptness of these fruits will make impression upon many who are deaf to all other arguments.

How should we furnish this proof? Not by setting up ourselves as judges over the persons of our opponents, nor so as to do them injustice, by forgetting how many of them are upright and learned men; but by showing the influence of their tendency of thought as actually exhibited in the collective life of Church and State since the last century, and comparing its effects in the different spheres of society.

On an attentive consideration of the spirit which animates our opponents as a body, the first thing which strikes us is the extraordinary overweening pride with which most of them treat all positive believers.* They lay claim to be the only representatives of science, and have repeated this so often to the people, that in Holland, Germany, and Switzerland the greater part of the press echoes this opinion as a matter of course, and lays all "orthodoxy," *i.e.*, belief in the Bible, under the reproach of ignorance and narrow-mindedness. And with this haughty spirit the theologians among them plentifully imbue their congregations. By their high-flying critical treatment of the Gospel history they flatter the spirit of the age, and puff up the "educated" consciousness of an age already intoxicated with culture, till its pride reaches an unbearable pitch; indeed, many of them often go so far as to rouse all the passions of intolerance against the "parsons," *i.e.*, the representatives of the old faith. When they are in a minority,

* Cf. Hofstede de Groot, *Die Moderne Theologie in der Niederlanden*, 1870, p. 29, et seq.

they cry for tolerance, and preach the doctrine of equal rights for every persuasion. But when they are the ruling party, sovereign reason shows herself to be most intolerant, and denounces those who cling to the old faith as the enemies of progress and of all truly human culture.

If we go on to consider their method of attack (and except the merely scientific representatives), we cannot help seeing what a despotism of phrases and commonplaces they have founded, so that thousands blindly applauded the half or not at all understood mottoes of the day; and what a confusion of ideas must be laid to their charge! The clear meaning of sharply defined Scriptural ideas accepted by the Church is gradually put aside, and another meaning substituted for it, so that while the shell remains, the true kernel is gone. During one thousand eight hundred years, *e.g.*, the word "resurrection" has been understood in the whole of Christendom to apply to the *body* of Christ; now, however, they change the meaning of the word into that of a continued existence of any kind, and declare as irrelevant the question whether our Lord's body was raised to a new life or not. In the Church the old forms are for the most part preserved; and in this case they continue to pray to Christ as ordered, though otherwise they consider Him to be the only son of Joseph, and prayer itself a subjective outpouring of the heart's emotions without objective effect on the course of affairs. Is this perfectly upright and truthful? Some are soon tired of this incongruence between the rites and liturgy of the Church and their own inward convictions, and enter other more congenial callings; but the growing generation is by these means (though not exclusively by them) disgusted with the study of theology. In many, however (especially during the first half of this century), this incongruence has been overcome by the earnest demands of life and holy office, which, though they left

the university as Rationalists, convinced them of their errors, and led them to preach salvation through Christ alone. Does all this bear witness to the healthy character of unbelieving principles ?

But let us look more closely at their fruits in the inner congregational life of the Church. Infidelity has of old emptied the churches and given an impetus to schismatics, because it cannot satisfy the deeper spiritual needs. What a display has infidelity made of its weakness in the pulpit by reason of its denial of the miraculous element in the great facts of salvation ! Let him who wishes to see instances take but a look at the utilitarian preachers of the times of "illumination" during the last century. It is well-known that these men did not disdain, even on high festivals, to stoop so low as to instruct the people in their sermons about farming, hygiene, vaccination, or cattle-feeding. And now ? There is no scarcity of high-flown words. But does the one thing needful—faith in Christ, conversion, and regeneration—still form the central object in the modern pulpit ? Alas ! not even for an earnest penitential sermon can one of these men collect his energies. Is not this a serious state of affairs ?

And what of the liturgical fruits of unbelief ? Just glance into the liturgies current during the zenith of Rationalism in the last century ; read those finely rounded phrases and paraphrases about God, virtue, and immortality, self-ennoblement, and Jesus Christ, the Eastern Sage of olden times, and confess that you would hardly have believed so utter a want of taste to be possible. Or glance over the hymn-books of that time, with their miserably watered old hymns, and their practically, as well as theologically, shallow and pitible humanitarian odes. And how is it in our day ? Why, if formerly there was at least the shadow of a worship, now the attempts made in Haarlem, Gröningen, Neuchâtel, to establish a truly "modern" Divine service, have, by

their miserable failure, gone far to prove the utter futility of all such endeavours. In due time, then, worship would have to cease altogether.

In the matter of Church constitution and government (in which believing theology, it is true, has made many mistakes also), the chief historical achievement of unbelief (in Germany) is the "Territorial System"—a theory which considers the Church and its government to be only a part of the State and its constitution as such, and must lead to the former being entirely emerged in the latter. And at this day unbelief seeks to betray the inalienable rights of the Church to the State, and to prove the omnipotence of the latter, as against any act of Church discipline meant to defend the positive doctrine, hoping that the State may soon pronounce for the equal rights of all parties within the Church. Modern unbelief seeks to efface the specific distinction between Church and State, and thereby robs the former of its vital power.*

Again, look at the influence of unbelief in the active congregational life of the Church, in the institutions for the extension of God's kingdom, and see the paralysis which follows its ascendency. The German-Danish mission in Tranquebar flourished vigorously during the former part of the last century, till the triumph of Rationalism at home dried up its supports and caused it to wither away. And how do these liberal unbelievers seek to hinder and malign the work of missions at the present day by distorted criticisms! But as to doing better themselves, which would be the best criticism, they have not lifted up a finger. The institutions of our inner missions, too, have almost all of them been founded and supported solely by the love and liberality of believers, while unbelievers have done little else than embitter their existence by repeated attacks.†

* This paragraph applies more especially to Germany.

† Witness the venomous attacks on the "Rauhe Haus" at Hamburg (Dr. Wichern's institution).

But perchance unbelief has proved itself to be a firm support of the State, and a source of moral strength in public and political life? The best tests of a principle are furnished by times of public distress and danger. But as soon as a war is imminent, the power of unbelief in a nation immediately sinks in a marked manner, and even unchristian journals at once begin to speak more of God and Divine help. An involuntary instinct fills the churches; the need of a higher assistance is plainly felt, and the fine phrases of unbelief cannot give this. These facts are questionable enough for the support under trouble which unbelief can afford. And when the thousands upon thousands of wounded need spiritual consolation, how little can unbelief afford this? In the last war—I say it deliberately, for I have witnessed it myself—this task devolved almost entirely on believing ministers, often at the request of their free-thinking colleagues. Here the pastoral bankruptcy of the rationalistic clergy was clearly evident in their total inability to satisfy the spiritual cravings of the suffering and dying. It would be laughable, were it not rather to be wept over, that unbelief should ever attempt to minister to the spiritual needs of man.

But, putting aside such seasons of distress, what are the political and social fruits of unbelief in a general way? History very plainly tells us that apostasy from the faith very soon deprives a nation of its power and authority. As in the family, when its life is not based upon the fear of God, all domestic bonds are soon destroyed by the unfettered power of selfishness, so that dangerous laxity or arbitrariness is substituted for earnest discipline in the education of children—so, too, in civil and national life. The people that will not bow to Divine authority will eventually break through the bounds of all human order in endless revolutions. The self-love, which would fain be wiser than Divine revelation, at last snaps all the bonds of society. The new

faith (of Strauss), practically carried out, is the Commune, which, during its ascendency, was always talking of philosophy. Unbelief will ruin every nation which does not in time resist its all-poisoning influences.

The result of historical investigation shows that all these results of unbelief have the same inner ground—viz., that it is without the Spirit of God, which alone creates and preserves all true life. But if the fruit be evil, then the tree and its roots are evil also; and foolish, indeed, is he who would gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

In our attack on unbelief we must expose these its fruits: It boasts itself of helping progress, and hinders it; it inscribes "culture" on its banner, and threatens us with a new and a worse barbarism; it promises to bring in the age of true humanity, and yet it injures the dignity of man, so as to deprive him of any specific moral value, because it overlooks the fact that humanity can only be saved and prosper by means of Divinity.

We must protest, then, against unbelief in the name—not only of Scripture, of faith, and of God's honour, which it tramples in the dust; not only of our spiritual experience, which it does not understand—but also of reason, which it leads astray. We must protest against it in the name of a healthy Church life, of fruit-bearing preaching and care of souls; of the truth and purity—ay, even the good taste and æsthetics of our worship; in the name of a healthy discipline and constitution of our congregational life; of the independence of the Church, which by it is betrayed to the State; of the Church's energy and power of increase; of self-sacrificing and self-denying love; of Home and Foreign Missions, which it tries to paralyze; in the name of all practical tasks of the Christian life, for which it has neither a deeper understanding nor yet energy to carry them out; in the name of morals and all true humanity,

which it undermines and destroys, since it separates them from religion, and saps its divine foundations. We must protest against it, not only as Christians, but as citizens and patriots who truly love their country, because the prosperous future of a nation, its freedom and power, its flourishing and healthy development, essentially depend upon its honestly holding fast to the Gospel as the Truth and the Life from God.

But this historical defence will not meet all objections, by reason of its negative nature; and I would therefore point out to you a more excellent, positive way, which I may call the *practical religious method*—I mean the *actual proof of the Christian truth by means of a Christian life.*

When we look at the growing power of unbelief, and the infinite variety of agencies employed in its propagation, from the journals and associations of mere humanitarianism, down to those of the most radical communism, with its secret societies, and travelling agents and lecturers, it is evident that such a social power cannot be met merely by scientific and historical arguments. These may suffice to convince individuals; but against the close columns of unbelief the Church must use her last and most effective weapon,—the practical and moral superiority of her representatives in an all-embracing love and holy life. This practical religious method is the most convincing of all, and truly irresistible, and must in the end gain over all those who are of the truth. This it was that worked so mightily in the first ages of the Christian Church, and will continue to do so to the end. Without it, infidelity will nowhere be defeated; and the growth of the latter is owing, in a great measure, to the fact, that the Church has too much neglected this branch of testimony. Truth is plentifully witnessed for in words and books, but not enough in life.

But speaking as I am before those who, I trust, have

long since been striving to give practical effect to this testimony, I may confine myself to a few hints as to the way in which it may be rendered most effectual.

And, first of all, let us remove from theological and ecclesiastical life the stumbling-blocks which have hindered so many from believing—the everlasting quarrels about things upon which salvation does not depend; the jealousy of one another; the narrow-mindedness at home and (alas, too) abroad, which cannot lovingly enjoy the brother's success, because he does not wear quite the same ecclesiastical uniform; and, instead of all this, let the flame of believing and wide-hearted evangelical love among the various denominations burn more brightly than hitherto. A great, positively believing Ecumenical Evangelical Alliance — notwithstanding all variety in matters ecclesiastical, and esteem for the forms of faith delivered to us—is in itself a practical apology, which makes an impression upon thousands, a justification of the indestructibility of our fundamental faith, a Christian Evangelical International, which may oppose the atheistic International with superior spiritual weapons. Let us, in order to establish more firmly the unity of our one fundamental position, ever draw more clearly the line between the essential and the non-essential; and let us protest against the destructive error which maintains that no such line is to be drawn, but that all tendencies have equal rights in the Church. Our German liberalism has not, in this respect, attained to so correct a judgment as the same party in England and America. These would say to those in our Evangelical Church, who, *e.g.*, attacked the Apostles' Creed, "Why do you not join the Unitarians?" while with us they are struggling to prove the admissibility of their continuance in a Trinitarian Church, by which means we shall eventually legalise Rationalism. You must help us to attain greater precision, even at the cost of a numerical diminution in the Church. Better for a Church to be small,

but united and decided, than large and broad, but inwardly torn and divided against itself.

And when we have drawn the necessary boundary lines, let us, for the sake of the unity, seek to give a more extensive visible representation of it (by means, *e.g.*, of an interchange of pulpits), so that the various churches may be strengthened by the faithful testimony of men of another communion. Let us force the unbelieving world to confess, as did the heathen of old, "See how these Christians love one another," and thereby we shall overcome a hundred prejudices.

This spirit it is which we should seek to implant in our evangelical congregations and people. Let us seek to bring about a more living communion between the churches, a greater interchange of their special gifts and experiences, and place the single congregation in connection with the course of events in the universal kingdom of Christ. We should make them better acquainted with the most important of these events, so that, if one member suffer, all the others may suffer with it; and if one be glorified, all the others may rejoice, as belonging to one body, whose head is Christ.

In addition to this, it is our duty at the present day to arm the members of our churches more fully against the specious arguments of infidelity. This should be done by laying a deep foundation in religious instruction, especially in that for Confirmation and preparation for Holy Communion, by weekly Bible classes or lectures, in which the members of our flocks should be taught more of the unity of Scripture, by Sunday-schools, young men's associations, reading-rooms, circulating libraries, associations for missions, the poor, the sick, &c. Thus a vigorous Christian social and congregational life would be put forward in opposition to the infidel associations, and it would act as a firmly forged chain, from which one link could not easily be lost.

When we have, by all these means, built a powerful

dam of Christian life against the swelling floods of unbelief, we should—while not forgetting always to keep these our foundations in repair—strive to win back lost ground by words and deeds. We must fearlessly witness for the faith, not only in the pulpit, but before our own congregations, but also in public lectures (as is now frequently done) before the unbelieving world. The mere fact of a man standing up, in the face of all the scorn of an infidel press, and openly declaring his belief in the Christian faith, notwithstanding his perfect acquaintance with all the arguments of its opponents, is an encouragement to many undecided ones. Then, again, let us confess what a mistake Christians in many places (especially in Germany) have made, in leaving the development of the public press almost entirely in the hands of infidels or semi-infidels, especially of Jews and their confederates. To meet this need we must found Christian journals, which shall correct the lamentably misguided public opinion; and, since this is beyond the power of isolated persons, we should form more Evangelical Societies, whose object it must be to spread Christian literature in every form, from the largest to the smallest works. And let us seek to connect all these associations, as much as possible, for the sake of mutual assistance. In this respect, I would recommend to your notice a proposal, emanating from Holland, to form an "International Association for the defence of the Christian faith against its actual aggressors."

A most important point in this practical work (especially for Germany) is that laymen should be more induced to assist in the work of the Church, and that the latter should not tire in labouring for the better keeping of the Sabbath, and for the release of millions of white slaves kept in bondage by Sunday labour, which can only be accomplished by a legal protection of Sunday rest and freedom.

But, amidst all this work, never let us forget the per-

sonal preparation in secret. If we are to conquer in our struggle against unbelief, it must be less exclusively than hitherto with word and pen, and more on our knees. Often while we fight hard we pray too little. Instead of at once fulminating against unbelievers, let us first wrestle for them with the power of intercessory prayer, that they may be enlightened by the Lord. No word or writing should go forth in this Holy War unaccompanied by prayer. Let no combatant enter the arena without putting on the spiritual as well as the intellectual panoply, that he may not fare as did the seven sons of Sceva. And let none who strive in the right spirit be left alone. Though we may not everywhere be able to succour and defend, yet the arms of our prayer can embrace the whole globe. Thus only can we become so filled with the Spirit that the image of Christ, the great Captain and Conqueror in the battle, shall shine out of every action, and victoriously enlighten our opponents, when they see in our whole walk and conduct greater love and self-denial, greater self-sacrifice, greater quietness and firmness in distress and danger. The Christian is the world's Bible, and the only one which it reads. If we take care that in this book be plainly shown the loving spirit, the grandeur, and the winning friendliness of Christ, then we shall see many hearts open to receive this actual testimony of Christian life and suffering. For many of our opponents in secret envy us our Christian comfort in misfortune and under heavy losses. Their hearts are often stirred by a deep yearning after the support which bears us up, and this superiority of Christian life can often drive the hardest heart to seek help of our Lord.

In fine, only life can beget life. Where we wish to defend the Word of Life, our own life cannot be separated from the Word. The strongest argument for the truth of Christianity is the true Christian, the man filled with the Spirit of Christ. The best means of bringing back the world to a belief in miracles is to exhibit the miracle

of regeneration and its power in our own life. The best proof of Christ's resurrection is a living Church, which itself is walking in new life, and drawing life from Him who has overcome death.

Cyprian writes of Christians in the third century: "In their dress, their food, their manner of life, they follow the customs of the country, and yet they are distinguished by a universally remarkable way of living. They take part in everything as citizens, and they endure everything as strangers. Every country is their native land, and in every country they are foreigners. They live in the flesh, but not after the flesh. They dwell upon earth, but they live in heaven. They love all men, though all men persecute and malign them. When they are cursed, they bless; and when they are killed, they hail the day of their death as their true birthday."

Before such arguments ancient Rome herself—the mightiest empire of the world, and the most hostile to Christianity—could not stand. Let us live in like manner, and then—though hell should have a short-lived triumph—eventually must be fulfilled what St. Augustine says, "Love is the victory of the truth."

Already the world is beginning to be divided into the two great camps of the unbelieving and the faithful. In many, unbelief has probably become incurable. Before such we can only confess the truth for a testimony against them. The Antichrist who denies Father and Son can be destroyed, not by men, but only by the Lord in the brightness of His coming. But the holy task that falls to the lot of every Christian is to continue to do battle for the truth after the measure of his strength, in the power of that victory which Christ has already gained for us, and which He has promised one day to complete. May not only individuals, but may every Protestant people recognise that it ought to contribute its special gift toward the great world-apology for Christianity: Germany, her deep and earnest science; England, her

trustful meditation on Scripture, her faithfulness in pastoral work, her open-handed charity; America, her energetic activity and liberality, her fearlessness in public testimony for the truth, her indelible love of freedom; and all others, great or small, the talent entrusted to them. If all thus unite in holy zeal for God, the victory cannot be wanting. Forward, then, my brethren, and let us not weary of the strife! Our field of battle is the wide world; our aim, the honour of God; our support amidst strife and suffering, the certainty that our faith already *is* the victory which hath overcome the world!

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